

marine mammal mitigation and monitoring requirements in §§216.218 and 216.219, holders of Letters of Authorization for activities described in §216.211(a) of this subpart must determine, from Table 1 in §216.217(b)(1), the appropriate explosive severance mitigation/monitoring scenario to follow for the blasting category, species-delineation zone, and charge configuration for their activity.

(2) [Reserved]

§216.216 Mitigation.

(a) The activity identified in §216.211(a) must be conducted in a manner that minimizes, to the greatest extent practicable, adverse impacts on marine mammals and their habitats. When conducting operations identified in §216.211(a), all mitigation measures contained in this subpart and in the Letter of Authorization issued pursuant to §§216.106 and 216.218 must be implemented. When using explosives, the following mitigation measures must be carried out:

(1)(i) If marine mammals are observed within (or about to enter) the marine mammal impact zone identified in Table 1 in §216.217(b)(1) column 5 for the relevant charge range and configuration (i.e., BML or AML) for the activity, detonation must be delayed until the marine mammal(s) are outside that zone;

(ii) Pre-detonation surveys shall not begin prior to sunrise and detonations shall not occur if the post-detonation survey cannot be concluded prior to sunset;

(iii) Whenever weather or sea conditions preclude adequate aerial, shipboard or subsurface marine mammal monitoring as determined by the trained observer, detonations must be delayed until conditions improve sufficiently for marine mammal monitoring to be undertaken or resumed;

(iv) Whenever the weather or sea conditions prevent implementation of the aerial survey monitoring required under §216.217(c)(2), the aerial survey must be repeated prior to detonation of charges; and

(v) Multiple charge detonations must be staggered at an interval of 0.9 sec (900 msec) between blasts.

(2) [Reserved]

(b) If a marine mammal is found seriously injured, or dead, the explosive severance activity will immediately cease and the holder of the Letter of Authorization, designee or the designated lead observer will contact the Minerals Management Service and the Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service' Southeast Regional Office, or designee at the earliest opportunity. Procedures and monitoring methods will be reviewed and, if necessary, appropriate changes made to the mitigation and monitoring measures prior to conducting the next detonation to avoid future injury or mortality takings.

(c) Any mitigation measures proposed to be contained in a Letter of Authorization that are not specified in this subpart, or not considered an emergency requirement under §216.219(d), will first be subject to notice and comment through publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER, as provided in §216.219(c).

§216.217 Requirements for monitoring and reporting.

(a) Holders of Letters of Authorization issued for activities described in §216.211(a) are required to cooperate with the National Marine Fisheries Service, and any other Federal, state or local agency with regulatory authority over the offshore oil-and-gas activities for the purpose of monitoring the impacts of the activity on marine mammals.

(b)(1) Table 1 summarizes the required mitigation and monitoring survey modes, duration and zones for all blasting scenarios of marine mammal impact zones for implementation of surface and aerial monitoring requirements depending upon charge weight and severance scenario.

(2) Holders of Letters of Authorization must fully comply with the relevant mitigation and monitoring program for the explosive-severance activity described in subparagraph (c) of this paragraph that corresponds to the holder of the Letter of Authorization's blast scenario shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. BLAST CATEGORIES, MITIGATION SCENARIOS, SURVEY AND TIME REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL EXPLOSIVE SEVERANCE SCENARIOS.¹

Blasting Category	Configuration (Charge wt/ placement)	Species Delin- eation Zone	Mitigation Scenario	Impact Zone Radius	Pre Det Surface Survey (min)	Pre Det Aerial Survey (min)	Pre Det Acoustic Survey (min)	Post Det Surface Survey (min)	Post Det Aerial Survey (min)	Post Post Det Aerial Survey (Yes/No)	Waiting Period (min)
Very-Small	BML	Shelf (<200 m)	A1	261 m	60	N/A	N/A	30	N/A	No	30
	(0-10 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	A2	(856 ft)	90	N/A	N/A	30	N/A	No	30
	AML	Shelf (<200 m)	A3	293 m	60	N/A	N/A	30	N/A	No	30
	(0-5 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	A4	(961 ft)	90	N/A	N/A	30	N/A	No	30
Small	BML	Shelf (<200 m)	B1	373 m	90	30	N/A	N/A	30	No	30
	(>10-20 lb)	Shelf (>200 m)	B2	(1,224 ft)	90	30	N/A	N/A	30	No	30
	AML	Shelf (<200 m)	B3	522 m	90	30	N/A	N/A	30	No	30
	(>5-20 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	B4	(1,714 ft)	90	30	N/A	N/A	30	No	30
Standard	BML	Shelf (<200 m)	C1	631 m	90	30	N/A	N/A	30	No	30
	(>20-80 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	C2	(2,069 ft)	90	30	120	N/A	30	No	30
	AML	Shelf (<200 m)	C3	829 m	90	45	N/A	N/A	30	No	30
	(>20-80 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	C4	(2,721 ft)	90	60	150	N/A	30	Yes	45
Large	BML	Shelf (<200 m)	D1	941 m	120	45	N/A	N/A	30	No	30
	(>80-200 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	D2	(3,086 ft)	120	60	180	N/A	30	Yes	45
	AML	Shelf (<200 m)	D3	1,126 m	120	60	N/A	N/A	30	No	30
	(>80-200 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	D4	(3,693 ft)	150	60	210	N/A	30	Yes	45
Specialty	BML	Shelf (<200 m)	E1	1,500 m	150	90	N/A	N/A	45	No	45
	(>200-500 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	E2	(4,916 ft)	180	90	270	N/A	45	Yes	45
	AML	Shelf (<200 m)	E3	1,528 m	150	90	N/A	N/A	45	No	45
	(>200-500 lb)	Slope (>200 m)	E4	(5,012 ft)	180	90	270	N/A	45	Yes	45

¹ Severance of subsea structures that do not penetrate the sea surface will follow the mitigation scenario for above mudline (AML) detonations even if charges are placed below mudline.

(c) Holders of Letters of Authorization must ensure that the following monitoring programs are conducted as appropriate for the required monitoring scenario.

(1) *Surface monitoring survey.* A surface monitoring survey must be conducted for the length of time that corresponds to the relevant explosive severance scenario. Surface monitoring surveys are to be conducted from the highest vantage point and/or other location(s) that provide the best, clear view of the entire impact zone. These vantage points may be on the structure being removed or proximal surface vessels (i.e., crewboats, derrick barges, etc.). Surface surveys are restricted to daylight hours only, and the monitoring will cease if the designated lead observer determines that weather or marine conditions are not adequate for visual observations.

(2) *Aerial monitoring survey.* Aerial surveys are required for all explosive severance scenarios except monitoring scenarios A1–A4. Aerial monitoring surveys are to be conducted from helicopters running standard low-altitude search patterns over the extent of the impact zone that corresponds to the appropriate explosive severance scenario. Aerial surveys will be restricted to daylight hours only (defined as “legal sunrise” to “legal sunset”), and cannot begin until the requisite surface monitoring survey has been completed. Aerial surveys will cease if the designated lead observer determines that weather or marine conditions are not adequate for visual observations, or when the pilot/removal supervisor determines that helicopter operations must be suspended.

(3) *Acoustic monitoring survey.*

(i) Acoustic monitoring surveys are required to be conducted on all Standard, Large, and Specialty blasting scenarios conducted at slope (≤ 200 m (656 ft)) locations (i.e., scenarios C2, C4, D2, D4, E2, and E4).

(ii) Persons conducting acoustic surveys will be required to comply with NMFS-approved passive acoustic monitoring protocols and use approved devices and technicians.

(iii) Acoustic surveys will be run concurrent with requisite pre-detonation surveys, beginning with the surface ob-

servations and concluding at the finish of the aerial surveys when the detonation(s) is allowed to proceed.

(4) Post-detonation surface monitoring survey. A 30-minute post-detonation surface survey must be conducted by the trained company observer for scenarios A1 – A4 immediately upon conclusion of the detonation.

(5) Post-detonation aerial monitoring survey. For scenarios B1–D4, a 30-minute aerial survey must be conducted immediately upon conclusion of the detonation. For scenarios E1–E4, a 45-minute aerial survey must be conducted immediately upon conclusion of the detonation.

(6) Post-post-detonation aerial monitoring survey. Post-post-detonation aerial monitoring surveys must be conducted for scenarios C4, D2, D4, E2 and E4 within 2–7 days after detonation activities conclude, by either helicopter or fixed-wing aircraft. Observations are to start at the removal site and proceed leeward and outward of wind and current movement. Any distressed, shocked, injured or dead marine mammals will be noted in the survey report, and if possible, tracked and collected after notifying the National Marine Fisheries Service within the time requirements stated in §216.217(f).

(7) If unforeseen conditions or events occur during an explosive severance operation that may necessitate additional monitoring not specified in this paragraph, the designated NMFS lead observer will contact the appropriate National Marine Fisheries Service and Minerals Management Service personnel as detailed in the Letter of Authorization for additional guidance.

(d) Holders of Letters of Authorization must conduct all monitoring and research required under the Letter of Authorization. Any monitoring or research measures proposed to be contained in a Letter of Authorization that are not specified in this subpart or not considered an emergency requirement under §216.218(d), will first be subject to public notice and comment through publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER, as provided by §216.219(c).

(e) *Reporting* (1) A report summarizing the results of structure removal

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activities, mitigation measures, monitoring efforts, and other information as required by a Letter of Authorization, must be submitted to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, within 30 days of completion of the removal activity.

(2) The National Marine Fisheries Service will accept the NMFS observer report as the activity report required by subparagraph (1) of this paragraph if all requirements for reporting contained in the Letter of Authorization are provided to the NMFS observer before the NMFS observer's report is submitted to the PROP Manager.

(3) If a marine mammal is found shocked, injured, or dead, the Holder of the Letter of Authorization, or designee, must report the incident to the National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office, at the earliest opportunity.

§216.218 Letters of Authorization.

(a) To incidentally take marine mammal species listed in §216.211(b) pursuant to these regulations, each company or contractor responsible for the removal of the structure or an industry-related seafloor obstruction in the area specified in §216.211(a) must apply for and obtain either a Letter of Authorization in accordance with §216.106 or a renewal under §216.219(a).

(b) An application for a Letter of Authorization must be submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service at least 30 days before the explosive removal activity is scheduled to begin.

(c) Issuance of a Letter of Authorization and renewal of a Letter of Authorization under §216.219(a) will be based on a determination by the National Marine Fisheries Service that the number of each species or stock of cetaceans taken annually by the activity will be small and that the total taking over the 5-year period will have a negligible impact on the species or stock of affected marine mammal(s).

(d) A Letter of Authorization may be renewed annually, subject to conditions in §216.219(a).

(e) A Letter of Authorization for activities in this subpart will not be valid after the effective period of this subpart.

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(f) A copy of the Letter of Authorization must be in the possession of the persons conducting the activity specified in §216.211(a) that may involve incidental takings of marine mammals.

(g) Notice of issuance or denial of a Letter of Authorization will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER within 30 days of a determination.

§216.219 Renewal and modifications of Letters of Authorization.

(a) A Letter of Authorization issued for the activity identified in §216.211(a) will be renewed annually upon:

(1) Receipt of an application for renewal of a Letter of Authorization under §216.218.

(2) Timely receipt of the report(s) required under §216.217(f), which have been reviewed by the Assistant Administrator and determined to be acceptable; and

(3) A determination that the required mitigation, monitoring and reporting measures have been undertaken.

(b) Notice of issuance of a renewal of the Letter of Authorization will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER within 30 days of issuance.

(c) In addition to complying with the provisions of §216.106, except as provided in paragraph (d) of this section, no substantive modification, including a request for a variance in the mitigation or monitoring requirements in this subpart or a withdrawal or suspension of the Letter of Authorization issued pursuant to §216.106 and subject to the provisions of this subpart, shall be made until after notice and an opportunity for public comment. For purposes of this paragraph, renewal of a Letter of Authorization under §216.219, without modification other than an effective date change, is not considered a substantive modification.

(d) If the Assistant Administrator determines that an emergency exists that poses a significant risk to the well-being of the species or stocks of marine mammals specified in §216.211(b), a Letter of Authorization issued pursuant to §§216.106 and 216.118, or renewed pursuant to this paragraph may be modified without prior notice and opportunity for public comment. A notice will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER subsequent to the action.